Claims 1-9, all the claims pending in the application, stand rejected.

Objections

The Examiner objects to the specification at page 9, line 14 because of a typographical error. This error has been corrected.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-9 are rejected as unpatenable over Rieder (5,769,718) under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). This rejection is traversed.

The Examiner repeats the basis for rejection that he set forth in the previous Office Action. In response to the Applicant's argument and amendment filed August 9, 2001 adding a limitation to claim 1 regarding switching background images, the Examiner points out that the limitation in switching background images is well known because such a stage is changed in the martial art video game after a fight is done before a new fighting stage begins.

Although both the present invention and the martial art video game change background images from one to another, a relationship between a previous background image before the changing and a subsequent background image after the changing in the present invention is quite different from the relationship between background images disclosed in the martial art video game.

The Prior Art

More specifically, it is to be noted in the prior art martial art video games, that the changing is triggered or started as long as a character does not finish a fight. After the changing, the same character moves to the next stage and starts another fight. It is noted that these two fights and stages are independent of each other because both of them might be done at two different locations or positions, for example, U.S.A. and Japan.

In this event, a previous state of the character should be initialized or canceled again at the beginning of the next stage, regardless of the state of the character in a previous stage. Thereafter, the character fights with another character different from a character appearing in the previous stage, at a location different from the location in the previous stage. For example, it is assumed in connection with "Street Fighter" that the location in the previous stage is placed in the USA. In this event, another location in the next stage may be placed in Japan. Thus, when

the stage is changed from one to another, <u>both the location and opponent character are also changed in the Street Fighter.</u>

Such movement or changing of the character from one to another place can be realized in the virtual world of the martial art video game, by changing the stages from one to another. It should be noted that changing the places or stages may take a significant time, just as movement from place to place in the real world takes time . During this time, the character may have a rest period that is long enough to recover its physical condition and to move to the next stage, e.g. to another country by airplane. This may show the movement of the character in the virtual world simulates that in the real world.

Therefore, in the real world, the player relatively accepts the passage of time. The martial art video game assigns the passage of time to processing time for reading image data of a new stage from recording medium such as CD-ROM and drawing the stage on a display device. In other words, <u>in the martial art video game, it is not considered to reduce waiting time for reading image data of a new stage from recording medium.</u> In practice, many martial art video games that are stored in CD-ROMs will have a waiting time between stages that usually is noticeably long.

The Invention

On the other hand, according to the present invention, each of background images before and after switching is expressed or recognized as a part of a single background image, a whole of which is larger than the screen of a display device.

Before and after switching background images, the characters act continuously and, in this connection, the last state of each character in the previous background image is kept as the first state of the character in the current background image. In the virtual world of the video game of the present invention, it takes a very short time for the character to move from a background to the next background. In other words, only a single step by foot may be needed to move to "the subsequent adjacent scene" (page 10, line 4). Whether in a single background or between two backgrounds, passage of time for taking a single step should be constant in the virtual world like in the real world, with the background images that are not changed so much and that may be continuous.

7

As mentioned above, both of the present invention and conventional martial art video games change background images. However, in martial art video games, the character moves through background images discontinuous with each other.

On the other hand, in the present invention, the character moves into the subsequent adjacent scene (page 10, line 4) that is not discontinuous from a previous scene but analogous. Under the circumstances, it may be said that the scene change according to the present invention is performed in an analog manner, not in a discrete manner.
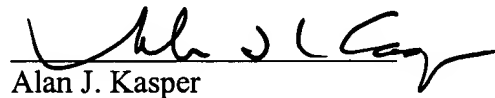
Taking the above-mentioned distinction into account, applicant has amended independent claims 1, 4 and 7-9 in order to explicitly define the difference between the changing of stages in martial art video game and the switching of background images according to the present invention.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Applicant hereby petitions for any extension of time which may be required to maintain the pendency of this case, and any required fee, except for the Issue Fee, for such extension is to be charged to Deposit Account No. 19-4880.

Respectfully submitted,

SUGHRUE MION, PLLC
2100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037-3213
Telephone: (202) 293-7060
Facsimile: (202) 293-7860

Alan J. Kasper
Registration No. 25,426

Date: January 28, 2002

8

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Paragraph 2 on page 9 is changed as follows:

:

Herein, consideration will be made about an example wherein the player character is carrying a Japanese samurai sword. In the moving mode, the player character enters the sword in its scabbard and is put into a state where it cannot grasp the haft therof. In fighting mode, the player character often draws the sword out of the scabbard in order to perform repeated attacks at any times. The fighting mode represents a state wherein the character is able to launch repeated attacks instantaneously, Therefore, if the player character uses a so-called 'quick draw' technique and then the blade of the sword of which the haft is held by the character may be kept in the scabbard.[.] This switching of operational modes is assigned to a prescribed push button switch on the controller 152, and is implemented according to the operational inputs performed by the player.

IN THE CLAIMS:

The claims are amended as follows:

1. A method of displaying, in a video game device, an image of a player character and images of non-player characters, together with one type of background image from at least two or more switchable types of background images that display scenes adjacent to each other in location, comprising the steps of:

predetermining a plurality of operational modes which are assigned to said player character, and preparing an image corresponding to each operational mode;

displaying an image of the player character corresponding to any one of said plurality of operational modes [and] together with images of said non-player characters with both the images of the player and the non-player characters kept unchanged, simultaneously with any one of said background images;

restricting the switching of said background images from the start until the completion of a predetermined particular operational mode of said plurality of operational modes; and

switching said background images from one to another in response to manipulation of an input device of the video game device after the completion of the predetermined particular operational mode.

4.   (Amended)   A computer-readable storage medium storing an image display program for displaying an image of a player character and images of non-player characters, together with one type of background image from at least two or more switchable types of background image that display scenes adjacent to each other in location, in a video game device, comprising:

a region storing images corresponding respectively to a plurality of predetermined operational modes which can be adopted by said player character; and

a region storing an image display program for causing a video game device to implement processing for displaying an image of a player character corresponding to any one of said plurality of operational modes [and] together with images of non-player characters with both the images of the player and the non-player characters kept unchanged, simultaneously with any one of said background images, processing for restricting the switching of said background images from the start until the completion of a predetermined particular operational mode of said plurality of operational modes, and processing for switching said background images from one to another in response to manipulation of an input device of the video game device after the completion of the predetermined particular operational mode.

7.   (Amended)   A storage medium storing a game program incorporating an image display program, the image display program comprising the steps of :

10

predetermining a plurality of operational modes which are assigned to a player character, and preparing an image corresponding to each operational mode;

displaying an image of the player character corresponding to any one of said plurality of operational modes [and] together with images of non-player characters with both the images of the player and the non-player characters kept unchanged, simultaneously with any one of background images that display scenes adjacent to each other in location;

restricting changing of said background images from the start until the completion of a predetermined particular operational mode of said plurality of operational modes; and

switching said background images from one to another in response to manipulation of an input device of the video game device after the completion of the predetermined particular operational mode.

8. (Amended) An optical disk storing a game program incorporating an image display program, the image display program comprising the steps of :

predetermining a plurality of operational modes which are assigned to a player character, and preparing an image corresponding to each operational mode;

displaying an image of the player character corresponding to any one of said plurality of operational modes [and] together with images of non-player characters with both the images of the player and the non-player characters kept unchanged, simultaneously with any one of background images that display scenes adjacent to each other in location;

restricting changing of said background images from the start until the completion of a predetermined particular operational mode of said plurality of operational modes; and

11

switching said background images from one to another in response to manipulation of an input device of the video game device after the completion of the predetermined particular operational mode.

9. (Amended) A video game device internally comprising the storage medium storing a game program incorporating an image display program, the image display program comprising the steps of :

predetermining a plurality of operational modes which are assigned to a player character, and preparing an image corresponding to each operational mode;

displaying an image of a player character corresponding to any one of said plurality of operational modes [and] together with images of non-player characters with both the images of the player and the non-player characters kept unchanged, simultaneously with any one of background images that display scenes adjacent to each other in location;

restricting changing of said background images from the start until the completion of a predetermined particular operational mode of said plurality of operational modes; and

switching said background images from one to another in response to manipulation of an input device of the video game device after the completion of the predetermined particular operational mode.

12